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Contras can't win, U.S. analysis says

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WASHINGTON—U.S. intelligence analysts have concluded that only the introduction of American combat troops in Nicaragua could resolve the conflict there, the House Intelligence Committee reported.

The committee said the analysis of top intelligence sources shows that it is essentially meaningless to continue aiding the anti-Sandinista contras.

"It continues to be the assessment of the U.S. intelligence community that only U.S. forces could truly resolve the conflict in Nicaragua on a military basis," the committee said in a report devoted to President Reagan's request for \$100 million in contra aid. The Democratic-controlled committee voted a week ago to reject the aid package, which includes \$70 million in military assistance and \$30 million in nonlethal aid.

The report, issued late Wednesday, is believed to be the first time that an internal U.S. intelligence assessment on the use of American military forces in Nicaragua has been disclosed publicly since the Reagan administration began funding the contras in 1982.

The intelligence community is made up of the Central Intelligence Agency, the Defense Department's Defense Intelligence Agency, the National Security Agency and other intelligence departments and bureaus in the State Department, the FBI and the Department of Energy. Their collective analyses and assessments are periodically given to the President and the congressional intelligence oversight committees.

In releasing the assessment, the committee said it was not endorsing the use of U.S. military force in Nicaragua, but only underscoring the futility of aiding the contras.

Reagan and his top advisers have said repeatedly that aiding the rebels may be the only way to

prevent the use of American forces in Nicaragua. In the report, the committee makes a strong case for U.S. negotiations with Nicaragua rather than the use of American forces.

The committee report also charged that in seeking to aid the contras to pressure the Sandinista regime to open talks with the rebels and make other concessions, the administration is ignoring additional intelligence community assessments that such a policy is likely to fail.

"This approach ignores intelligence assessments made since 1983 that the Sandinista government of Nicaragua is unlikely to agree to such negotiations for the simple reason that they would threaten the very basic structure by which it controls Nicaragua," the document said.

The report said that, after being briefed by intelligence officers on the White House program, the panel concluded that the rebels could not defeat the Sandinistas even if Congress approved the presidential request.

Intelligence officers advised the committee in a secret session that reportedly took place March 4 that the purpose of Reagan's aid request was not to overthrow the Sandinistas but to give the contras the ability to "exert enough pressure only to force the Nicaraguan government to negotiate seriously with the Nicaraguan resistance," according to the report.

The report was endorsed by all committee Democrats except Rep. Dan Daniel of Virginia, who joined the Republicans in a dissenting view.

"We fully support the President's request for assistance to the Nicaraguan democratic resistance," the dissenters said. "A vote against the [program] represents abandonment of the Nicaraguan people to Marxist Sandinista totalitarianism and abandonment of the cornerstone principles of American foreign policy, freedom and democracy."